



TESTIMONY

Submitted by Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO
The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home

Appropriations State Agency Budget Presentations - Health Agencies

February 24, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. I am also an RN with nearly 40 years' experience.

The CT Association for Healthcare at Home is the united voice for our DPH-licensed, Medicare-certified home health and hospice agencies.

I'm testifying before you today to thank the Department of Public Health for their incredible support to our providers during the pandemic and prior; however, they are as extended as our workforce is. They are operating in crisis mode...always putting out fires, yet not able to focus on future initiatives and needs of the providers that they license.

I'm not faulting DPH...they can only accomplish so many projects in the time and staff allotted. It's because of their thinned out staff along with planned retirements by June of this year that I urge this committee to find funding for dedicated DPH staff to update our 40+ year old regulations. Yes, I said 40 + year old regulations written in 1979!!! I will say that we have been at the table providing our proactive input and responsive feedback to DPH on both the home health and the hospice regulations for over 4 years now—it seems that most scheduled meetings get postponed or cancelled due to other priorities. Granted the COVID pandemic put a stall on our work, but we are forced to comply with regulations that do not match current practice. They are not aligned with our Medicare Conditions of Participation (our federal regulations) and they often force our providers to have more supervisory staff and more administrative burdens than necessary which comes at a high price tag.

In addition, we are in the worst workforce crisis ever. To have to have extra staff simply because it's required by the regulations is absurd and again, very costly when our funding doesn't begin to cover our costs. We're turning away cases daily because we can't even hire enough staff to see the patients never mind add staff that we don't need per our federal regulations but DO need per our state regulations.

This request in no way undervalues the efforts and dedication that DPH has put forth to ensure compliant, quality health care in CT. We would respectfully request that this committee strongly consider the critical need of ensuring that an agency as important as DPH has the funding and the staff to ensure that these issues and others like it are alleviated.

Thank you!

Tracy Wodatch

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